

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5071

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to school district territory included in city and town boundary extensions.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to territory included in city and town boundary extensions.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Haugen and Hochstatter; by request of Board of Education).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/21/97, 4/1/97 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Keiser, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Veloria.

Staff: Joe Hauth (786-7111).

Background: The Legislature has established statutory procedures for changing school district boundaries. If a town extends its limits to include any part of a school district operating on more than one site, then the issue goes before the regional committee of the educational service district (ESD). The regional committee decides which school district will contain the annexed property. The members of the regional committee are selected by the boards of directors of the school districts in the ESD.

If a town extends its limits to include any part of a school district operating all schools on a single site, or a school district operating elementary schools only on two or more sites, then the ESD superintendent must automatically transfer school district territory that is located within the annexed territory to the school district affiliated with the city or town that is annexing the territory. In cases involving school districts

that operate on more than one site one or more elementary, junior, or high schools, the regional committee may prepare a proposal for transferring school district territory in response to a town annexation. If no school or school site is located within the annexed territory, the registered voters residing in the territory may petition the school district for a transfer of school district territory. If more than 75 percent of the voters petition for a transfer of territory, the ESD superintendent must include the annexed school district territory as part of the school district within the city or town. Under certain circumstances, school districts may directly petition the regional committee to transfer territory from one district to another if no registered voters live in the territory in question.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature finds that the current boundary decision process is archaic, that some current procedural requirements restrict the flexibility of the State Board of Education to respond to proposed transfers, that citizens should have the opportunity to be heard on whether all land in a planned community should be in the same school district, and that current school district organization laws are outdated and need review.

The automatic transfer of annexed property of a one-site school district to an annexing city or town is changed. If a city or town annexes property in a one-site school district and the annexed property contains a school building, then the regional committee must have the discretion to decide which school district will contain the property.

Subject to several provisions, a regional committee may prepare a proposal concerning school district boundary cases involving a town *or city* annexation that affects a school district that operates one or more elementary schools and one or more junior high schools or high schools on more than one site. The inclusion of cities under this provision applies retroactively.

The State Board of Education may review regional committee school district organization recommendations for an extended period, if necessary.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee must conduct a study of school district organization policies, laws, and rules, and report its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 1997.

Beginning immediately and through June 30, 1998, school district boundaries may not be changed, unless a school district boundary change request satisfies specific conditions.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Current provisions are amended and several provisions are added regarding school district boundary decisions. An intent section is added. Subject to several provisions, a regional committee may prepare a

proposal concerning school district boundary cases involving a town *or city* annexation that affects a school district that operates one or more elementary schools and one or more junior high schools or high schools on more than one site. The State Board of Education may review regional committee school district organization recommendations for a longer period of time, if necessary. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee must conduct a study of school district organization policies, laws, and rules, and report its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 1997. A moratorium is placed on school district boundary changes effective immediately, through June 30, 1998, with limited exceptions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: School districts want the autonomy to make decisions regarding school district boundary changes. Lakewood School District's boundary should not be changed automatically due to the proposed city annexation. Arlington School District would benefit, but this action should not take place without people making a choice. This bill would be a win for everybody. The goal is to make sure that there is fairness for districts in school district boundary decisions. Both school district boundaries should remain as they are. We urge passage of this bill immediately.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Stevens, prime sponsor; Wayne Robertson, Superintendent, Lakewood School District; and Linda Byrnes, Superintendent, Arlington School District.